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THE
DANGER OF DELAY,
AND THE
SAFETY AND PRACTICABILITY
OF
IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION,
FROM THE EVIDENCE
BEFORE THE
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES
ON
Colonial Slavery.

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DANGER OF DELAY, &c.

The following are a few Extracts from the Evidence given before the Slavery Committee of the Two Houses, in the last Parliament. Many more of a similar character might be added, but the object being to disseminate the Evidence on the Danger of Delaying Emancipation in *an abridged form*, the Publishers have contented themselves with extracting *some* of the most *prominent passages*.

THE DUKE OF MANCHESTER.

Q. When your Grace left the Island, was not a feeling of security generally prevailing throughout the Colony in the minds of the Whites, and of a confidence and attachment between the Slave and the Master?

A. There was certainly a degree of confidence individually; you felt yourself perfectly safe in your own house. You were not afraid of any thing individually among the Negroes, but you were always aware, or suspecting that if an opportunity offered, they would, of course, naturally try to emancipate themselves; but, in fact, perfectly secure yourself. You have never thought of shutting a door or window on account of any want of security. In the night time, of course, whenever an opportunity offered, we were perfectly aware they would rise.

Q. Your Grace means personally safe?

A. Personally safe, certainly.

Q. The object of the question was whether there was a general state of confidence in the Island at the time your Grace left it, with regard not only to individual security, but the security of property, or was there any feeling of an insurrectionary kind among the Slaves?

A. It was very strongly suspected almost all the last year I was in the Island; something of the kind, and there were two or three attempts, but still that did not alter the situation of private security.

Q. Did any of the feelings your Grace has described of an unsettled state appear to arise out of the ill treatment of the Master to the Negroes?

A. No ; I should not say that they did. I should say that they arose from the natural tendency to better their situation, or free themselves from that situation.

JAMES BECKFORD WILDMAN, ESQ., a West Indian Proprietor and Possessor of 640 Slaves in the Island of Jamaica.

Q. Did you pay much personal attention to the management of your Estates ?

A. I did.

Q. Even when they (the Negroes) were without religious instruction, did you find them very inferior to the labouring classes of this country, in natural intellect ?

A. By no means.

Q. Did they appear competent to conduct the ordinary affairs of life in driving bargains with their fellow-men ?

A. They were particularly astute in driving a bargain.

Q. Have they a competent knowledge of profit and loss ?

A. Quite so.

Q. Were they quite conversant with the current market price of commodities, whether a thing was cheap ; had they the power of selling dear and endeavouring to buy cheap ?

A. Perfectly ; so that when I wanted to make purchases, feeling myself perfectly incompetent to cope with the tradesmen of Kingston, I used to send up one of my Negroes to bargain for me.

Q. With respect to offering rewards to your own Slaves, did you ever try to give them extra allowances for extra work ?

A. I did it in one or two instances ; I have endeavoured to get that system carried on by my own attorney, but I never could get them to enter into it with any willingness.

Q. Which is the party that would not enter into it with any willingness ?

A. The Overseer.

Q. Did you find the Slaves reluctant to adopt it ?

A. No ; by no means, I tried it in particular instances when I wanted to get work done ; I ascertained from my Overseer what he thought was a good day's work, there were four able men, and I directed them to open a deep trench, and to throw up a mound to plant log-wood on, and I told them to finish that by Saturday night, and they should have a dollar a-piece, they

worked till eleven o'clock on Saturday night ; there was a misunderstanding as to part, and it was not perfectly done.

Q. Did they work hard ?

A. Very hard, I would not have continued it. It would have destroyed my people.

Q. Did you ascertain from this work that they were disposed to work for money ?

A. I am perfectly convinced that if rewards were given them for labour, they would work readily in their present state.

Q. The question resolves itself into a question of profit and loss, on the part of the proprietor ; you mean to say, that persons may work for wages, if the wages were given ?

A. I have no doubt the slaves would do it, but I am convinced they would not do it if perfectly free.

Q. You think that it is only when in slavery they would work for money wages ?

A. That is the firm conviction of my mind.

Q. You stated a conversation you had with one of your negroes on the subject of emancipation, did you ever point to him, that in case of emancipation, he would work for reasonable wages ?

A. No, I did not.

Q. You never pointed out to the negro the difference between a state of slavery and a state of freedom—that if free he would be enabled to live upon his property, and be paid for his labour ?

A. No, I never entered into conversation with any but this man, I dare not trust myself to do it.

Q. If they are so shrewd, as you have represented them, do you not conceive that they could be made to understand that one great benefit of freedom was, that they would have the benefit of their own labour ?

A. They could be made to understand that.

Q. Could they not be made to understand that by reasonable industry they could enjoy their houses, live in the same state of ease, and enjoy many of the blessings and comforts of life ?

A. I think they could.

Q. Are you of opinion that the present state of things in Jamaica can continue long ?

A. I am satisfied it cannot, that is one reason why I endeavoured to have my people prepared for it.

Q. What would be the result supposing things to go on, as it has done the last five or six years in the island.

A. Generally speaking, they would get worse and worse.

Q. With respect to the state of the negroes, do you think it likely they would remain quiet if things remain just as they have done the last six or seven years?

A. If the same system of management is practised to them, I do not think they will remain quiet now.

Q. Do you conceive free labour is as cheap as slave labour?

A. Yes.

REV. WILTSHIRE STANTON AUSTIN.

A clergyman of the Established Church, and a native of the West Indies, resided in and is acquainted with Demerara, Surinam, Bahia and Barbadoes.

Q. You are a clergyman of the Established Church?

A. I am.

Q. Is your father a proprietor?

A. My father is a West Indian proprietor in the colony of Surinam.

Q. Have you resided with him?

A. I have, I have managed his property for eighteen months, when I was about eighteen years of age.

Q. How many slaves were there upon that property?

A. About 250.

Q. Therefore both by intercourse with them as a spiritual pastor, and before you undertook clerical duties as an overseer of their labour. You are conversant with their habits and their feelings?

A. I think I may venture to say I am.

Q. Judging from your knowledge of their feelings and habits, and also the effects you saw produced by only the hope of freedom, what do you think would be the effect of a sudden grant of freedom itself?

A. I cannot conceive for a moment, that the peace of the country would in any degree be endangered thereby.

Q. Supposing the value of all that is now given to each slave, by the master to be 6*d.* per day, are you of opinion that the slaves emancipated would work for him, for that 6*d.* paid in specie?

A. I have no doubt of it, I believe the negro would do twice as much work for himself or for hire, when he was to receive payment for his work, as he would do now. He now knows that he is to obtain nothing for diligence, whether he be idle, or whether he be active, he must receive the same support, and the same clothing; but it would alter the case entirely, when the slave was working for himself, with a prospect of accumulating property, and raising himself amongst his fellow men.

Q. Have you seen in the slaves a considerable desire to possess extra comforts?

A. I have, I beg leave to mention particularly two settlements of emancipated slaves in the Colony of Surinam, they were emancipated I believe by violence, in the first instance they emancipated themselves. I was for several years, but especially more particularly and constantly for about a year and a half, in the habit of trafficking with them; their employment was to bring down timber from the interior of the country, which they had hewn, and sometimes sawed into planks, and other things and bartering them for Rum, Sugar, and any thing else; they also brought surplus provisions, sometimes rice and yams, and various other things, and they accumulated considerable property for persons in their situations;—I had for instance, 10*l.* at a time of one man, in my own possession, keeping for him. A very intimate friend of mine, a physician and a planter, has told me that he had deposited with him to the amount of 300*l.*, belonging to different individuals among these said Negroes, for articles disposed of to him and to others.

Q. Have you no apprehension that the Slaves being emancipated, and possessing nothing which they could call their own, not even their houses, and aware of their own numerical superiority, would under those circumstances seek to exercise that numerical superiority for the purpose of possessing themselves of their land, and of their houses?

A. I have less apprehension on that score, than I have of apprehension under the same circumstances now, because it is precisely the present state of things; their numerical superiority is the same now, and their wants are the same, and I should say that there would be less cause of apprehension then than now.

Q. Is then not this great distinction, that now by law they are treated as unequal, and the moment they were emancipated they

would be admitted to an equality of privileges, but not an equality of enjoyments?

A. I think that an admission to equality of privileges would at once destroy the very feeling, which now gives rise to the insubordination; and the frequent insurrections we hear of. There would be this difference; the Slave would have constantly before him the prospect of bettering his condition, and of gradually and freely increasing his possessions.

Q. Does that circumstance in your opinion constitute the ground work of the safety of the change?

A. I think it is one of those circumstances, that would tend very materially to insure the peace and security of the country.

Q. Then are the Committee to understand that it is your opinion, viewing all these circumstances that there is more danger from withholding emancipation, than from granting it?

A. I am decidedly of that opinion; so much so, that if emancipation were granted, I should feel happy immediately to return to my native country, I am attached to it, and I should greatly prefer residing there on the score of Climate; if emancipation were granted, I would be glad immediately to return there with my family, but there is no consideration under the sun, that would tempt me to become the inhabitant of a West India Colony at the present moment; and if I were to return, I should be under the perpetual apprehension of personal danger from insurrection.

Q. But if emancipation were granted, you would return with your wife and children, without any apprehension?

A. I should be very glad to do so; I should think it a privilege and a happiness to do it.

Q. In your former examination, you mentioned two settlements of free Negroes in Surinam, whose freedom you described as having been obtained in a great measure by some act of violence, at what period was your knowledge of these settlements?

A. From about the year 1809, to the year 1815.

Q. Were those free settlements considered dangerous to the Colony in any way?

A. They were the only protection that the Colony had, with the exception of a small body of British troops, and some Colonial black soldiers.

Q. Did you ever hear of any want amongst those people?

A. There is no such thing.

Q. Are those freed Negroes generally drunken or sober in their habits?

A. Mine will be an extraordinary testimony in this respect, because notwithstanding my intimate acquaintance with them for several years, I can most positively assert, that (though I have heard of such a thing), I never saw one of them in the slightest degree disguised in liquor; I consider them the most moral in most of their habits, of any order of Negroes I have ever met with.

Q. What species of cultivation did they carry on?

A. Rice and provisions of various kinds, and they hew down a large quantity of hard timber, saw it into planks, and pieces of wood for other purposes, which they bring down to exchange with the Whites, for comforts and luxuries.

WILLIAM TAYLOR, ESQ. *thirteen years resident in the Island of Jamaica, seven years in a commercial capacity, and two years and a half under the management of Estates.*

Q. If a Slave works for his master so many days in the week, and then works for himself, first for his maintenance, and secondly for his comfort, do you think he would be incapable, when the whole of his time belonged to himself, of maintaining himself in comfort?

A. Of course he would not be incapable.

Q. Would he be unwilling?

A. I think not.

Q. In his capacity to be influenced by the fear of want, and by the hope of advantage, do you think he is upon a level with other labourers in European countries?

A. Certainly, considering the peculiarity of his present condition, it would be unfair to institute a comparison between the Slave Negro and the free Scotchman, but with reference to the peculiar circumstances of each, I think he would; I used every opportunity I possibly could, that the peculiar state of Jamaica, and my own situation would allow me, of introducing voluntary labour; and I would say generally, that I never yet failed when I could exhibit palpably to a Slave the immediate prospect of pecuniary advantage.

Q. If the Negroes were emancipated, would they not have recourse either to labour for themselves, or to wages in the service of those who would employ them?

A. Certainly.

Q. Will you look at that paper, and see whether it contains any opinion of yours upon the subject?

A. Yes, this is mine; this was procured from me by an individual, and an old acquaintance of mine, whom I had known in Jamaica, visited me in the country, and we got into conversation upon the subject; he wished to have my sentiments upon the subject, and I hastily took this sheet of paper, and wrote down what I called the heads of my opinions upon the subject, and this paper I know conveys the result of what I have thought and felt upon the subject.

Q. Have the goodness to read it?

A. 1st. Let emancipation and strict police arrangements be contemporaneous. 2nd. Ample materials would be found for a police corps in the coloured class, where services could be had at a low rate of charge. 3rd. Avoid paying the emancipated Negroes by means of allotments of land; these would detach them from regular daily labour; pay them in money. 4th. At first there would be difficulties, but gradually, I think the equitable price of labour would be ascertained, and act as the producer of regular labour. 5th. A stipendiary magistracy would be requisite, not only because the peculiar prejudices of the present magistracy generally unfit them for the office, but because the whole time of individuals would be required to discharge the then additional duties. 6th. The island would have to be divided into districts, each possessing a certain portion of the constabulary force, with a stipendiary magistrate, and a house of correction, or other penitentiary. 7th. Were the island thus divided, and the police and magistracy properly organized, I firmly believe that emancipation might take place with perfect security. 8th. Of course there would be difficulties, obstacles, and disappointments in working out and carrying into effect the detail of the system of emancipation; but if Government would address themselves manfully to the work, telling the planters on the one hand that such is their determination; and the negroes on the other, that while they aim at instituting equal laws, and securing them their civil and religious liberty, they no means design that idleness should be at their option, I am convinced that the result would be as beneficial in a pecuniary way to the planter, as it would be elevating and humanizing morally to the present degraded Slave. 9th. The present system is incurable; it will not modify, it must be utterly

destroyed. My experience as a planter assures me, that to attempt to engraft religion and humanity upon Slavery, with the hope of profitable results, is a vain and fruitless endeavour. A religious man is a most unfit person to manage a Slave estate. The fact is, cruelty is the offspring of the present system ; so long as Slavery exists, and the whip is the compellor of labour, it is folly to talk of humanity. Legitimate motives are taken away, and coercion becomes the spring of industry, and in proportion to the application of this cause, that is coercion, is the effect on labour. 10th. The Negro character has been much underrated, even, I think by the Negro's friends. When justice is done to him, even in his present degraded circumstances, he shows a sagacity, shrewdness, and a disposition to a regular social life, that emphatically prove that he only requires freedom secured to him by law, to make him a useful, and, in his situation, an honourable member of the human family.

REV. P. DUNCAN, *resided in Jamaica between eleven and twelve years as a Wesleyan Missionary.*

Q. What do you think would be the conduct of that part of the population, supposing they were emancipated, with regard to their obedience, and with regard to their being brought under the subjection of the authorities now existing in Jamaica ?

A. I cannot conceive there would be any great alteration, they would be much the same, I presume, as they are at present.

Q. Did it ever occur to you that emancipation might take place with perfect tranquillity, and without producing any discontent ?

A. I have sometimes thought upon the subject, and now my mind is perfectly made up, that, even if the Negroes were to be emancipated at a stroke, I do not think there would be that disturbance or loss either to themselves or to their masters, that would in all likelihood be the result of the continuance of a state of slavery.

Q. Supposing emancipation to take place, and the negroes, being free, were no longer obliged to come and work upon the estates, what would be the mode by which the master would be able to get any persons to do the requisite work upon his estate ?

A. I do not believe that it would be a matter of half so much difficulty in practice as it seems in theory ; and for this reason,

that the negroes would be so conscious of their dependence, that they would still rely upon their master as the chief means of their support, the same in a state of freedom as they do in a state of slavery.

REV. J. THORP, *a Clergyman of the Established Church, residing in Jamaica twenty-seven years.*

Q. Judging from the experience you derived during your residence in Jamaica, coupled with what you have since heard, have you any fixed opinion with regard to the danger or safety of emancipating the slaves in the Island of Jamaica?

A. I never believed that there would be any danger attending it; I believe that the danger would principally be from the continuance of slavery; and my reasons for stating this is, that as far as my own parish is concerned, there were a very considerable number of negro slaves, respectable in character, who would themselves be the first to suppress any act of insubordination on the part of others, as they are a class of persons to whom the rest look up with a degree of respect. My reason for stating that I believe there would be danger from the continuance of slavery is, from the knowledge the slave has obtained of his rights, and of his being unjustly deprived of them, and his gaining such a degree of knowledge as will render him dissatisfied with his condition.

REV. JOHN BARRY, *a Wesleyan Missionary, residing from 1825 to 1832 in Jamaica, with the exception of about a year.*

Q. Do you believe that the Negroes, speaking of them as a body, would be willing to labour for the maintenance of themselves and their families if slavery was abolished?

A. That is my opinion, and that opinion is founded upon my observation of the industrious habits of the negroes.

Q. Do you also think they would work for hire?

A. I believe they would, and for this reason,—I never met an instance in which they had annexed to the idea of freedom an exemption from labour. They know the value of money as well as any man, and will labour for a proper pecuniary remuneration. That some difficulties, in the event of freedom, may occur in the first instance, I think probable, but I am sure they will return to a labour for a proper remuneration.

Q. Do you believe upon the whole that there is a great and strong desire in the negro population to be emancipated?

A. I do.

Q. Are you of opinion that if no hope of emancipation was to be held out to the slaves, that there would be any danger of their becoming discontented, and inclined to mutiny?

A. I believe that the feeling of freedom has got abroad so effectually among the slave population of Jamaica, that they will never be satisfied until that state shall have arrived; and I found that opinion strongly, upon the following fact, that during the execution of those who were legally sentenced in the late insurrection, with a very few exceptions indeed, they all died glorying in their death, and stating that had they ten or twenty lives they would sacrifice all sooner than return to slavery.

Q. Do you think, that by any amelioration of the condition of the slave, this prospect of danger could be prevented slavery, continuing?

A. I certainly do not believe that any amelioration of slavery will ever reconcile the slave to his present condition.

REV. THOMAS MORGAN, *residing for sixteen years in*
Slave Colonies.

Q. Can you assign any reason why the slave who may hereafter be emancipated, whether singly or in a body, if subject to a rigorous police, should be less industrious or less successful than the present class of the free coloured people?

A. I see no reason to believe any thing to the contrary.

Q. Have you ever considered the probable effect that emancipation would have upon the system of the cultivation of the ground?

A. Yes; I consider that it would be favourable to cultivation.

Q. You are of opinion that adequate labour could be obtained as well by fair regular wages as by compulsion?

A. Yes; I believe that the Negroes would be quite willing to work for a fair remuneration.

Q. You have delivered an opinion that emancipation would be beneficial in its effects on Colonial agriculture; on what do you ground that opinion?

A. On the industry of the Negro; I think he would work much more for his employer in the same time.

REV. WILLIAM KNIBB, *a Baptist Missionary, seven years resident in Jamaica.*

Q. It has been stated by yourself, as well as by others, that religion and Slavery cannot co-exist: but a little while ago you stated, in the course of this day's examination, you here stated that religion was spreading fast?

A. Yes, and my opinion is, that if nothing is done for the Slaves, in three years they will be all free, they will take their freedom by violence—it is spreading more in its enlightening, than in its sanctifying influence; they begin to see; they will learn to read, no one can stop it.

Q. Intelligence keeps in advance of religious principle?

A. It does.

Q. Though religious principles may restrain them, intelligence keeps them a-head of that.

A. Yes, what I stated was this, that religion was an enlightening influence. It has enlightened thousands in this country, to whom it has not done good beyond giving them a thirst for knowledge.

Q. Are you aware whether the discussions respecting the Poles has been ever talked of in Jamaica, with reference to the state and condition of Slavery?

A. They were usually discussed in the Newspapers the Slaves had, and the impression on my mind was, that then it was exceedingly unwise; the Poles were eulogised for their endeavours to obtain freedom.

Q. In your subsequent conversations with the Slaves who had been implicated in the rebellion, did they state to you that they had been aware of the discussions about the Poles?

A. They stated that they had read from the English Newspapers that the British people did not like Slavery; and that they expected from that that they would never fight against them, if they tried to regain their liberty, others informed me, that it was a common practice on the properties, as they could not read themselves, to have persons to read the papers that came from England, and the Jamaica Courant.

Q. Do you think that there was an impression upon the minds of the Slaves, that it was a praise-worthy act to risk their lives for the sake of obtaining freedom.

A. That was the impression of those men, at least, one of them stated that if he had twenty lives, he would risk them all

in the cause of freedom. There was one on Round Hill Estate (I think that is the name of the Estate,) who went up to the soldiers and said, "I will never work again as a Slave; give me freedom and I will work, you may shoot me;" he opened his breast, and they shot him immediately.

Q. Have you had any opportunity of forming any opinion upon the subject of the Negroes supporting themselves by their own labour if they were emancipated?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it your opinion that the Negroes if emancipated would labour for wages?

A. It is my opinion.

VICE ADMIRAL THE HON. CHARLES FLEMING, *who has known the West India Colonies for thirty-five years, and has been altogether for about five or six years in the West Indies.*

Q. Did you observe upon the whole that they (the Slaves) were industrious in their habits, or otherwise?

A. The Slaves are not industrious unless when they work for themselves, but when they work for themselves upon the Saturdays that they have, and the Sundays, they are very industrious in cultivating their own lands; I have had Slaves who worked for hire afterwards most industriously.

Q. When they work for the benefit of their masters under compulsion, they are not so industrious as when they work for their own benefit?

A. Certainly not; it has always appeared to me that Slaves, worked in a gang with Overseers, did as little as they could avoid doing; but by hire work, as much as they could do.

Q. Do you apprehend from what you know of the state and condition of the Slave population, that, if all hope of emancipation was to be extinguished, they would remain quiet in a state of hopeless Slavery?

A. No, not for a moment; I think the only reason why they are tranquil now is, that they do hope to be emancipated by the Government of this country, and I do not believe, that any Island that ever I have visited, would be tranquil for a moment, if that hope was cut off; I certainly believe, that insurrection will soon take place, if the Resolutions of the House of Commons are not carried into effect.

Q. Will you state your reasons for forming that opinion?

A. The reason I have for forming that opinion is, their great anxiety on the arrival of any news from England, to know what is going on; their constant conversation among themselves, and the interest they show whenever they have it in their power, to acquire a knowledge when the term of their emancipation will take place, and likewise their great desire to free their children.

Q. Did the Free Blacks maintain themselves in ordinary comfort?

A. Around the place that I lived in, which was called Clare Mount, in the Port Royal Mountains, the whole district was almost peopled with Free Blacks, and they lived in very great comfort.

WILLIAM ALERS HANKEY, Esq.

Q. Are you a West India proprietor, and possessing Slaves?

A. Possessing Slaves.

Q. How many Slaves?

A. About three hundred is the number on our estates as near as may be.

Q. When you consider the great share which the discussion of the question of Slavery, at the present moment, forms of the public discussion, both here and in Jamaica, are you not of opinion, that the Slaves possessing the faculty of reading, must necessarily read what is very stimulating?

A. Certainly, I have not a doubt about that; it is inevitable, I think.

Q. Recollecting the certainty that they will read publications of this sort, is it your opinion that Slavery can long continue, the Slaves possessing this knowledge and being so stimulated.

A. I think not.

THE END.

